



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: Aug. 29, 2006 (06-37)  
Contact: Mike Louisell (360) 902-1813

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560  
Visit our Web site at: [agr.wa.gov](http://agr.wa.gov)

## **WSDA offers free testing for Johne's disease in cattle**

**OLYMPIA** – Cattle owners can have their animals tested – free of charge – for Johne's disease by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. The program is funded through a U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperative agreement and the push is on to get as many herds tested as possible by the end of the year.

Johne's disease, also called paratuberculosis, is a bacterial disease of the intestinal tract. The organism that causes Johne's disease in animals is shed in the feces of infected animals and it can take up to four or five years for the signs of Johne's to become evident. The disease, which is incurable and can be fatal, is more common in dairies, but is still a problem in beef herds nationwide.

"The key to managing this disease is identifying and removing infected cows and preventing disease spread from cows to calves," said Mark Kinsel, a WSDA veterinarian coordinating the state's Johne's program. "The Johne's control program is a great opportunity for cattle owners to take advantage of free testing to determine if the disease is on the farm, and to have a customized risk assessment performed by your certified veterinarian."

Private veterinarians will be paid to do a complete herd assessment and evaluate animal-raising practices, from calving to milking. A plan, specific for the herd, will then be developed with the owner/manager to reduce the likelihood of transmission of Johne's and other intestinal diseases.

Johne's is generally introduced to a herd from an outside animal that carries the disease, but appears to be healthy. While the disease occurs in a number of hooved animals, the program only applies to cattle.

To determine the prevalence of the disease in a particular herd, the state will pay for blood testing of up to 300 head. A risk assessment and a herd management plan must be completed to participate. WSDA will reimburse the private veterinarian for the planning efforts.

"We're particularly interested in getting herds tested by the end of the year to take advantage of additional funding we've received from USDA," Kinsel said.

Ranchers and dairy operators interested in having a risk assessment or a herd management plan should contact their veterinarian or Mark Kinsel at (360) 902-1878 ([mkinsel@agr.wa.gov](mailto:mkinsel@agr.wa.gov)). For more information on Johne's disease, go to the University of Wisconsin Johne's Web site at <http://www.johnes.org> or the U.S. Animal Health Association site at <http://www.usaha.org/committees/jd/jd.shtml>.

###